

THE AMERICAN VETERAN
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SEGMENT TITLE: TOMO THERAPY

KANE FARABAUGH, HOST: THE V-A MEDICAL CENTER IN ALBANY, NEW YORK, IS THE FIRST GOVERNMENT HOSPITAL TO HAVE A CUTTING EDGE TECHNOLOGY THAT SPECIFICALLY TARGETS CANCER TUMORS. AND DOCTORS THERE SAY IT'S REVOLUTIONIZING THE WAY CANCER IS TREATED AND CURED. AT STRATTON V-A MEDICAL CENTER IN ALBANY, NEW YORK, THEY'RE CELEBRATING SOMETHING NEW.

LORI HOFFMAN-HOGG, CANCER PROGRAM DIRECTOR, STRATTON VAMC: WE ARE THE ONLY FEDERAL FACILITY IN THE NATION TO HAVE THIS EQUIPMENT. AND IT REALLY OFFERS PATIENTS THE STATE OF THE ART EQUIPMENT TO TREAT THEIR CANCER MORE PRECISELY.

FARABAUGH: YOU'RE LOOKING AT THE TOMO THERAPY MACHINE. IT'S A NEW GENERATION OF RADIATION THERAPY WITH A PRICE TAG OF ALMOST 3-MILLION DOLLARS -- NOT INCLUDING INSTALLATION. THIS MACHINE TAKES A C-T SCAN OF THE CANCER TUMOR AND DELIVERS HIGHER DOSES OF RADIATION WITH PINPOINT ACCURACY -- EVEN TO THE HARD-TO-REACH TUMORS.

FRED ROBERTS, CEO, TOMO THERAPY, INC.: THE TUMOR CHANGES SIZE AND LOCATION DURING THE COURSE OF TREATMENT. AND NOW WE HAVE THE ABILITY TO ADAPT THE TREATMENT PERIODICALLY OR EVEN ON A DAILY BASIS.

TIM REID, ARMY VETERAN: I FOUND OUT I HAD LUNG CANCER ABOUT NINE WEEKS AGO.

FARABAUGH: ARMY VETERAN TIM REID IS FIGHTING HIS OWN BATTLE. THE CANCER IS IN HIS LUNGS AND IS NOW SPREADING TO HIS BRAIN.

REID: THEY'VE GOT TO KILL THE BRAIN CELLS BEFORE THEY CAN DO ANYTHING TO THE LUNGS. AND I DON'T THINK THE LUNGS ARE GONNA HANG, YOU KNOW. THEY'RE NOT THERE. I AIN'T GOT MUCH LUNG,

FARABAUGH: IN TREATING PATIENTS LIKE TIM, HERE'S HOW TOMO THERAPY WORKS.

DR. DUNCAN SAVAGE, M.D., RADIATION ONCOLOGIST, STRATTON VAMC: BEFORE THE ACTUAL PATIENT TREATMENT GOES ON, A CAT SCAN IS DONE AND THERE'S A VERY SOPHISTICATED COMPUTER PLANNING SYSTEM WHICH

WILL TAKE THOSE CT IMAGES AND DECIDE HOW CLOSE OR HOW FAR WE ARE FROM THE INTENDED TARGET.

ROBERTS: AND THEN SHAPE THE RADIATION DOSE AROUND THE TUMOR AND VERY CAREFULLY AVOID ALL THE ADJACENT NORMAL STRUCTURES.

FARABAUGH: ULTIMATELY, MINIMIZING POTENTIAL SIDE EFFECTS -- ONE REASON WHY SOME DOCTORS BELIEVE TOMO THERAPY IS A STEP ABOVE STANDARD RADIATION TREATMENT. LIKE THIS ONE IN THE ROOM NEXT DOOR.

BOB GENNARELLI, RADIATION THERAPIST, STRATTON VAMC: BASICALLY WITH THIS MACHINE, IT'S KIND OF A POINT AND SHOOT MACHINE. WHATEVER ANGLE WE WANT TO DELIVER TREATMENT AT, WE'LL STOP, DELIVER THE TREATMENT. THE TOMO THERAPY MACHINE DIFFERS IN THAT THE SOURCE OF THE X-RAYS IS CONSTANTLY ROTATING AROUND THE PATIENT AND DELIVERING ITS TREATMENT.

REID: ALL YOU'VE GOT TO DO IS JUST STAY STILL AND LET IT DO ITS THING. YEP. IT'S A GREAT MACHINE.

FARABAUGH: THE TOMO THERAPY DEVICE IS CUTTING EDGE.

SAVAGE: TO USE PROSTATE CANCER AS AN EXAMPLE, WE KNOW THAT THE HIGHER DOSE OF RADIATION THERAPY THAT YOU GIVE FOR PROSTATE CANCER, THE BETTER YOUR CHANCES ARE OF BEING CURED. WITH THIS KIND OF TECHNOLOGY, WE ARE ABLE TO GIVE THAT DOSE THAT WE NEED TO THE PROSTATE, IMPROVING THE PATIENTS CHANCES FOR CURE, AND THEN MINIMIZING SOME OF THE POTENTIAL SIDE EFFECTS.

FARABAUGH: TIM REID BELIEVES TOMO THERAPY IS WHAT HE NEEDS IN HIS FIGHT AGAINST CANCER. SO, HE'LL CONTINUE TO LET THE MACHINE DO ITS JOB AND HE'LL CONTINUE TO DO HIS.

REID: JUST KEEP THE FAITH.

FARABAUGH: MORE THAN HALF OF STRATTON'S 300 CANCER PATIENTS ARE RECEIVING TOMO THERAPY. V-A MEDICAL CENTERS IN SEATTLE AND PITTSBURGH ARE NOW WORKING TO GET TOMO THERAPY IN THEIR HOSPITALS.

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THE AMERICAN VETERAN IS PRODUCED BY THE U.S. DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS